



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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21 April 2011

### IND103727.E

India: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) political party in India, including differences between the Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), led by Simranjit Singh Mann, and the Shiromani Akali Dal led by Parkash Singh Badal  
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The *Political Handbook of the World 2011* notes that the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) is a Sikh party led by Parkash Singh Badal, who is Chief Minister of Punjab, Sukhbir Singh Badal, the President of the party, and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, the Secretary General (2011, 632); Sukhbir Singh Badal is the son of Parkash Singh Badal (*Punjab Newslines* 31 Jan. 2008). The party's influence is mostly limited to Punjab, although it takes part in national elections, reportedly "campaign[ing] against excessive federal influence in Sikh affairs" (*Political Handbook of the World 2011*, 632).

A variety of sources indicate that the SAD is prone to factionalism (Kumar 18 Dec. 2004, 5442; *Punjab Newslines* 31 Jan. 2008; *Political Handbook of the World 2011*, 632). Ashutosh Kumar, an academic writing in the Mumbai-based multidisciplinary journal *Economic and Political Weekly*, notes that the party's divisiveness is "especially" acute when "in power due to conflict over party policies as well as the leadership" (18 Dec. 2004, 5442). Online news site *Punjab Newslines* adds that "[e]ach faction claims to be the real Akali Dal" (31 Jan. 2008). It further states that in "2003, the SAD headed by Parkash Singh Badal was the largest faction and the one recognized as having the name SAD by the Election Commission of India" (*Punjab Newslines* 31 Jan. 2008).

### Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal)

The government of Punjab, according to Virginia Van Dyke, a South Asian studies lecturer at the University of Washington writing in *Asian Survey*, is currently led by a coalition between SAD and the Indian People's Party (Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP) (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 982). The Punjab state government website mentions that the executive leaders are Governor Shri Shivraj V. Patil, Chief Minister Sardar Parkash Singh Badal, and Deputy Chief Minister Sardar Sukhbir Singh Badal (India n.d.a).

Expressindia.com, a "general interest" information portal published by the Indian Express Group (Expressindia.com n.d.), reports that in October 2010, the SAD (Badal) held a majority in the 160-member house of the [Shiromani

Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee] SGPC (16 Oct. 2010). In an April 2004 article in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Kumar notes that the SGPC is the "highest temporal seat ... of the Sikh community," which provides "legitimacy" and financial support to the SAD (3-16 Apr. 2004, 1517).

Van Dyke indicates that the SAD (Badal) "controls all three state-level arenas of political contestation," which are ministerial, organizational, and the SGPC (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 977). According to academics, SAD (Badal) is a moderate political party (Van Dyke Nov.-Dec. 2009, 995; Singh 2007, 566). The Chennai-based *Hindu* newspaper reported that in 2009 SAD (Badal) president Sukhbir Singh Badal released a manifesto reinforcing the party's "commit[ment] to safeguarding and promoting the interests of minorities" (21 Apr. 2009). The manifesto also pledged to promote "growth and development" in provinces by working towards transforming "Centre-State relations" (*The Hindu* 21 Apr. 2009). An article in *The Tribune*, a newspaper based in Chandigarh, reiterates the party's commitment to community development and state-centre relations (20 Apr. 2009).

According to Van Dyke, the governing coalitions between the BJP and the SAD (Badal) "at the state and central level" have given the Punjab state government "stability and credibility" (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 979). She adds that "[t]he BJP has stood resolutely with the ... chief minister of Punjab, Parkash Singh Badal, in the face of factional fights and attempts to pull down his government from within" (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 979). The two parties, according to Indian Elections website, which provides information and results on elections in India, are also aligned nationally in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (n.d.a).

Van Dyke points out that "in the run up to the 2007 assembly elections, various militant-affiliated factions, and/or factions opposed to Badal's dominance of the party, attempted to create a viable opposition to Badal" (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 996). She says this was evident in a public clash between the politician Simranjit Singh Mann and his supporters and Badal, who did not allow them access to an event honouring the "birthday of a historical Sikh saint," when they tried to access the platform from which the event was being hosted (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 996-997). In a similar incident, an article in Expressindia.com refers to a disruption caused by supporters of Mann during a Sikh celebration (15 May 2010). They were protesting that chief Simranjit Singh Mann was prevented from addressing the gathering while the BJP president was allowed to make a speech (Expressindia.com 15 May 2010). Corroboration of this event could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

### **Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar)**

According to the *Political Handbook of the World*, Simranjit Singh Mann, the leader and president of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) (Mann) faction, also referred to as SAD (Amritsar), is a "radical" (2011, 636). An article in Expressindia.com refers to supporters of SAD (Mann) as "Sikh hardliners" (15 May 2010).

According to the *Political Handbook of the World*, "in November 2006 Mann was acquitted of sedition for allegedly advocating establishment of Khalistan, a Sikh homeland" (2011, 637). Van Dyke refers to the SAD (Mann) as "pro-Khalistan" (Nov.-Dec. 2009, 996). In corroboration, *Outlookindia.com*, a news source from New Delhi, notes that there are only three Punjab organizations left promoting the creation of Khalistan, "a separate Sikh nation," SAD (Mann), the

Akali Dal (Panch Pradhani) and the Dal Khalsa (22 June 2009).

Expressindia.com reports that Simranjit Singh Mann openly supported Pal Singh, a suspected state terrorist who had been arrested, and offered "moral and financial help," claiming that Singh had "been falsely implicated of terrorist activities" (Expressindia.com 5 Aug. 2010). The same source also notes in a June 2008 article that a member of the SAD (Amritsar) was arrested for sedition, and that two senior members were suspected of "anti-national activities" (ibid. 9 June 2008).

### **Other Factions of SAD**

The All India Shiromani Akali Dal (AISAD), led by Jaswant Singh Mann, is another faction of SAD (*Political Handbook of the World* 2011, 632; Expressindia.com 16 Oct. 2010). Sources also identify other factions as SAD (1920) and SAD (Delhi); this second group is led by Paramjit (also spelled as Parmjit) Singh Sarna (Expressindia.com 16 Oct. 2010; Van Dyke Nov.-Dec. 2009, 997). Another faction mentioned is the SAD (Longowal) (ibid.; *Political Handbook of the World* 2011, 632; *Punjab Newslines* 31 Jan. 2008). However, the *Political Handbook of the World* notes that SAD (Longowal) rejoined the SAD (Badal) in 2007 (2011, 632). *Punjab Newslines* also mentions the following SAD factions:

- SAD (Panthik), which merged with the Congress Party [officially named the Indian National Congress, and India's "oldest" political party, originating in 1885 (Indian Elections n.d.b)];
- SAD (Delhi);
- SAD (Democratic);
- Haryana State Akali Dal; and
- SAD Amritsar (Punj Pardhani) (31 Jan. 2008).

Van Dyke also lists the Dal Khalsa as a SAD faction (Van Dyke Nov.-Dec. 2009, 997).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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**Oral sources:** A professor in the Department of Political Science at McGill University, an academic from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, an academic writing in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* in Mumbai and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD - Badal) did not respond within the time constraints of this Response. The Head Office of SAD (Amritsar) and a reader in economics at Oxford Brookes University Business School were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), Australia - Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, *Hindustan Times* [Gurgaon], Indian Elections, National Portal of India, NDTV.com, Press Trust of India (PTI), *Punjab Globe* [Ludhiana], Punjab Mail Online [Ludhiana], Rediff.com, Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal), The Sikh Encyclopedia, South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), United Nations (UN) Refworld, *World Sikh News* [San Jose, California].

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